

Given a paragraph including a series of details of an event, the reader summarizes these into a main idea.

**UNIT 2**  
**Lesson 1**  
**Understanding Details**

## TECHNICAL TALK

Many stories contain a large number of facts. In a selection about history, you might find three names, five dates, and four places. Often, it is hard to try to remember all of these items. You need to know that several facts are usually placed together and point to a main idea. Be sure to read through the whole story before you try to learn all of the facts. See if you have found the main idea. In other words, do you know what the author is trying to say? Look for underlined or capitalized words. They may help you find the main idea. Your job is to look at the small facts and match them to one main idea.

### TRY IT

As you read "Technical Talk," you read several sentences. All of the sentences pointed to one idea about how you should read stories. Let's see if you can summarize the main idea of the selection.

Which of the following is the correct answer?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Not all sentences present facts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Remember the main facts and try to summarize them into a main idea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. It is not important to try to remember all facts.

If you checked number 2, you chose the correct answer. The last sentence under the "Technical Talk" section is the key.



What is the main idea in the following selection?

### STEPHEN FOSTER: A GREAT AMERICAN SONGWRITER

Stephen C. Foster wrote about two hundred songs. Although he lived to be only thirty-eight years old, he wrote many songs that became famous. One of the most popular numbers was "Oh! Susannah." This song was played and sung in many foreign countries like England and France. Many people who played the banjo in minstrel shows used his music. Foster made much money from his music. Such songs as "Old Folks at Home" and "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair" sold very well. People liked his songs because they reminded them of their homes. There is a bust of Foster in the library of Congress. It was placed there in 1954. "Old Folks at Home" is the official state song of at least one state. Mr. Foster is one of the greatest and best-loved songwriters of America.

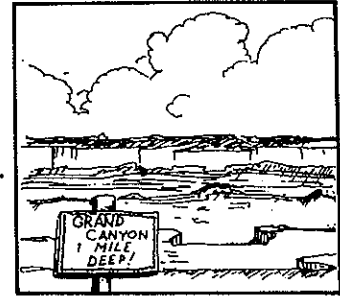
## REVIEW

## UNIT 2 Lesson 2 Understanding Details

The life story of Mr. Foster is interesting. Even though it presents many facts about his life, there is only one main idea. Let's see if you can remember what it is. Pick out the one sentence in the following list which is the main idea, then check your answer with the answer key.

1. Stephen Foster lived to be thirty-eight years old.
2. Mr. Foster made much money writing his songs.
3. One of America's greatest songwriters was Stephen Foster.

Now see if you can pick out the main ideas in the following paragraphs.

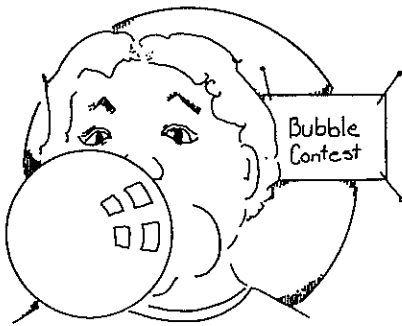


### THE MOST FAMOUS CANYON IN THE WORLD

1. The most famous canyon in the world is found in Arizona. The Grand Canyon is the home of the Hopi Indian tribe. On the south rim of the canyon is found the famous Hopi House. These Indians are known for their dances. Their instruments consist of items made of wood and gourds.
2. Many scientists believe that the canyon was cut from solid rock by the Colorado River. The water exposed the rocks, which are at least six colors. Most visitors are impressed with what they see and take pictures with their cameras.
3. The Grand Canyon is very large but can be easily reached by tourists. The canyon is about four to eighteen miles in width and over two hundred miles long. Tourist highways run along both sides of the canyon. This famous canyon is approximately eighty miles northwest of Flagstaff, a major Arizona city.
4. The Grand Canyon was discovered almost 450 years ago by Spanish soldiers. They were crossing the desert to seek gold and glory. They saw the mighty gorge and were surprised by what they saw. They could not understand how a river could cut a canyon out of solid rock.
5. The huge rocks found in the Grand Canyon are different from most rocks because they have brilliant colors. When light strikes them they change colors and glow. For many years, scientists have studied the rocks. They have discovered that the rocks were formed from hot lava that flowed thousands of years ago.

*Directions:* Below are five sentences which are main ideas. Place the number of the paragraph above on the line to the left of the correct main idea.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Even though Grand Canyon is large, you can get there by tourist highway.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. A very famous Indian tribe lives in the Grand Canyon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. The Colorado River probably formed the Grand Canyon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. The famous canyon is cut from rocks that glow and were made of lava.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Men knew about the Grand Canyon before 1600.



### HAVE YOU EVER CHEWED PLASTIC?

1. How long have people chewed gum or similar substances? Hundreds of years ago people chewed wax or the hard sap from trees. It was bitter and very hard. Sometimes they mixed the sap with sweet syrup to make it taste better.
2. Chewing gum as we know it today is only a little over 100 years old. Thomas Adams began selling it about 1870 in New Jersey. However, the gum he sold was made from chicle.
3. The chewing gum that we have today is made from several gums. It is flavored with peppermint and wintergreen oils to make it taste good. Some gum is made from different kinds of plastics. Bubble gum is made from a tough plastic so it will keep its shape when it is filled with air.
4. The process of making chewing gum includes a number of steps. First, the gums and plastics are heated until they are very soft and then they are mixed with sugar or syrup and some flavoring. Next, the mixture is kneaded and rolled and cut into strips. Powdered sugar is used to coat the gum and then it is cut and wrapped.
5. Many reasons are given for chewing gum. Some people chew gum to make their breath smell better, while others chew gum to relax them when they are nervous. Some students feel they can think better when they chew gum.

*Directions:* After reading the five paragraphs about chewing gum, complete the following exercise. Place the number of the paragraph above on the line to the left of the main idea which matches it best.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. We have used chewing gum for many years in this country.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. People have many reasons for chewing gum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Ancient people chewed things like gum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. There are several steps in making chewing gum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Chewing gum is made from several things.

### HOW DID YOU DO?

